

Series: God Is Jealous #1820

Title: Nahum 1.2; Zechariah 1.14

The Jealousy of God for Jerusalem

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We have been talking about the God who is jealous. It is the nature of God to be jealous. It is the character of God to be jealous. This is amply proven throughout the Scripture. And last time I shared with you two ways in which God uses His jealousy. I hope you were with us for that. As a reminder, we saw that first, God is jealous to be served. We read from Joshua chapter 24. Second, God uses His jealousy to discipline His sinning people. Psalm chapter 79 was our text. Before turning to the New Testament, let me share with you two more ways in which the jealousy of God is on display in the Old Testament.

Third, God demonstrates His jealousy by bringing vengeance on His enemies. Nearing the end of the Hebrew Bible, we come to the Book of Nahum. Nahum (N-A-H-U-M) is a prophet. We do not know anything about the man himself, except that he was an Elkoshite. His name means comfort or consolation. It is a short form of the name Nehemiah, which means comfort of Yahweh. Nahum prophesies against Ninevah, the great Assyrian city. Assyria was a great world empire and God used the Assyrians to bring judgment against the northern kingdom of Israel in the 700s BC.

You may remember Ninevah better as the city where God sent the prophet Jonah. Jonah did not want to go and preach there, so he set sail in another direction but the Lord sent the great fish to swallow Jonah and so the prophet ended up exactly where YHWH wanted him! And he did preach repentance and the Ninevites did repent. But when we get to the Book of Nahum, the season of repentance had sadly ended and the Ninevites were again living in outright idolatry. Listen to Nahum chapter 3 and a couple of verses. This is God speaking, **“Woe to the bloody city, completely full of lies... (the city) of the many harlotries of the harlot, the charming one, the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations by her harlotries and families by her sorceries.”** That describes the witchcraft and the occult which was thriving in Ninevah.

Verse 5 of Nahum 3, **“Behold, I am against you, declares the Lord of hosts... ⁶ I will throw filth on you and make you vile, and set you up as a spectacle. ⁷ And it will come about that all who see you will shrink from you and say, ‘Nineveh is devastated! Who will grieve for her? Where will I seek comforters for you?’”** It has been a century since God used Jonah to draw the Ninevites to Him. Now, God’s judgment is coming on their sinful ways, and we return to Nahum chapter 1 to hear the Word of the Lord. I am reading Nahum 1, verses 1-3,

“The oracle of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite. ² A jealous and avenging God is the Lord; the Lord is avenging and wrathful. The Lord takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies. ³ The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and the Lord will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, and clouds are the dust beneath His feet.” This text definitely reveals this fact: God takes vengeance on His enemies and He does so by His jealousy. “A jealous and avenging God is the Lord.” (Verse 2.) The Lord takes vengeance on whom? On His adversaries and enemies. Notice that in verse 3 Nahum emphasizes, “The Lord is slow to anger.” Yes, God is. But that is our over emphasis today. We like to think of the Lord as only being slow to anger. But the Bible reveals God is slow to anger *and, simultaneously* God is jealous, avenging, and wrathful.

To be biblically balanced, we must understand that God *is* slow to anger, but this does *not* mean He will leave the guilty *unpunished*. Indeed, God will always punish the guilty. As is the case here with the again *unrepentant* Ninevites (the Assyrians). And sure enough, we know from the biblical and secular historical record that one of the world’s other great empires, the Babylonians, destroyed Assyria and the city of Ninevah along with it, all under God’s sovereign hand of control. God demonstrates His jealousy by bringing vengeance on His enemies. And, by the way, God will also judge the Babylonians as He does all world empires then and now.

Something else should be noted here in Nahum. What provokes the Lord's jealousy? Yes! Again it is idolatry. Remember, God is jealous of anyone or anything who is a rival to Him and makes people *unfaithful* to Him the Only God. The dedicated worship of false gods and goddesses, which the Assyrians had in abundance, is a violation of the loyalty all people, for all time, are to have for *The Only God*. And so the jealousy of the Lord prompts Him to take action and, in this case, bring down an entire empire. This is serious stuff.

So that's third. God demonstrates His jealousy by bringing vengeance on His enemies. Fourth, God's jealousy makes Him jealous for the land of Israel. If you are following along in your copy of God's Word, then you can come with us further along towards the end of the Old Testament and the Book of Zechariah. When we get to Haggai and then Zechariah we are dealing with the timeframe of yet another world empire, the Persians. In 538BC Cyrus the Persian ruler freed the captive Israelites and allowed them to return to Jerusalem. About 50,000 of them left Babylon and re-settled back in the land of Israel. And, according to Ezra, some of these began to rebuild the temple, but discouragement settled in and it stopped them from completing the rebuild.

And so, sixteen years later God sent Zechariah and Haggai to again stir up his people to action. And, in particular, Zechariah's message is: keep building the temple because one day, in the future, the Messiah will come and inhabit the temple! Build now, not just for yourselves, but for a future generation at the coming of the Messiah. This was a message of strong encouragement. And sometime you ought to sit down with coffee or tea and Zechariah. It is a truly *awesome* book, because it is focused on the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, I will say this: you cannot truly grasp all of who Jesus is without reading and understanding Zechariah. Alas, you will have to do that on your own time, because our purpose today is to lift out just one verse.

I am reading Zechariah chapter 1 and verse 14. **"So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, 'Proclaim, saying, thus says the Lord of hosts, I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion.'"** Zechariah 1.14. You heard the Word of the Lord. "I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion." The Lord is not just jealous. He is *exceedingly* jealous. For what? For the city of Jerusalem and Zion. (For the place, for the land.)

Follow God's jealousy through this First Testament, as we have done. In the Ten Commandments God declares He is jealous in the covenant He makes with Israel. **"I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God."** Then the Lord manifests jealousy in punishing Israel for their sin. Ezekiel 5, verse 13 reads, **"Thus My anger will be spent and I will satisfy My wrath on them, and I will be appeased; then they will know that I, the Lord, have spoken in My zeal when I have spent My wrath upon them."** The word zeal there can also be translated jealousy. "I have spoken in My jealousy...in My zeal." And here, in Zechariah, the Lord is jealous for His city Jerusalem.

The Lord will defend *His* city. Zion is literally an area in Jerusalem. Also the city of David and used figuratively of God's kingdom. This place is *not* abandoned by God. If you think Jerusalem, as currently constructed and governed is the way it will always be, then you *really* need to read and believe the Bible. Again, read all of Zechariah! Read straight through to the Revelation. God has not forgotten about the Israelites and Israel and Jerusalem. The Jews have a prominent place in what *still* lies ahead on the calendar of the Lord Almighty. And God is *jealous* for the land. And again, we could point to many other texts that say just this.

I mentioned that we also want to find the Lord's jealousy in the New Testament. And, we will. But glancing up at the clock and hearing it go tick, tock, we better preserve that for our next gathering. We certainly have enough here today to ponder and apply to our lives. Let's all soberly ask ourselves, have we provoked the Lord's jealousy in *our* lives by being idolatrous? In what ways have *we* created and worshiped idols? Let's seriously identify these false gods and repent of our subservience before them.

To repent is to change one's behavior. To repent of idolatry means we stop worshipping false gods. And we turn wholeheartedly to the exclusive worship of the One True God. My prayer for us all is that we will do this today. Join us next time as we continue to discover that God is jealous.

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